Gentlemen —

An Essay
On the Use of the Obstetrical Forceps.

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Gentlemen -

It is interesting to examine the records of Medical Sciences, from the earliest periods of Antiquity; and Note the gradual improvements and important additions, which have been effected within its limits. In the days of Hippocrates and Galen, a knowledge of the entire Cycle of the healing arts could be acquired in a very brief period; but the domain of Physic has been so much increased, during the long era of time, that seperates us from those worthy pioneers, that a single life time is insufficient to gain a familiar acquaintance with its best resources.

In Medicine as in the other Sciences, much has been promulgated

that was worthless, Theories have arose and fallen, coming forth as a mighty blast they gradually diminished down, until they sank into the regions of Obscurity.

Measures have been brought into vogue, and were favourably received for a time, but were finely abandoned, while others more rational and effective were adopted in their stead.—

Among the more important discoveries of modern times, ranks the Obstetrical forceps, the good effects of which, have been experienced wherever the Obstetric Art has been practiced in the Civilized World.—

It is not my purpose in this

brief essay, to give an historical Ac
count of the discovery of this instrument
or eulogize its inventor, or perfections,
but I wish to draw your attention, and
solicit a more thorough investigation
of this important points of Obstetrical Arts.

The Comparative Advantages of the
Obstetric forceps and Cesarean Section has
been warmly discussed. Of Latter years, each
has fourteen partizans Justly famous
in their Calling; who have adhered tenacio
usly to their adopted remedies, and as
parties disagreeing; And with the young
and inexperienced physician it would
be a matter of serious doubt, which of
the two is the safest, most Available
and effective remedy —

From the period in which the forceps

were invented and employed in the practice of Obstetrics; up to the beginning of the present Century, the instructions regarding their use, delivered by the fathers of the Obstetric School are, once must have been to a mind endowed with the most ordinary acumen, so vague and unsatisfactory, as would lead a practitioner to suppose that the forceps was one whose use was fraught with the utmost danger, or of such difficult application, that none, but those enriched with the Wisdom of a Solomon should dare to make a trial of their power—

The time at which they ought to be called into Operation, once the innumerable Cautions regarding their proper application, were to many of the more Cautious and timed such insurmountable barriers,

that the facies Hippocratica itself could hardly have induced them to overcome, and, even by the lapse of years, the vestiges of these instructions seem not yet to be entirely obliterated, for in this Age of learning and enlightenment they are far from holding that high position [illegible] Many practitioners, which they appear to me to eminently to deserve.

From these circumstances such fearful fatality attended their application, and, of necessity, such heavy responsibility, that it cannot be a Matter of astonishment they were but sparingly employed, and kept to the last, and always as a desperate resource, and that the instrument thus feared for its truly unmerited disrepute, being looked upon with more horror than death itself; for as is usual, those who were least acquainted with their use

were
loudest in their Condemnation, And threw upon
them that Opprobrium which all the Wisdom
of the present Century has not been adequate
to efface.

In a recent Number of the Lancet,
I have Observed a communication from Mr
Joshua Waddington, F. R. C. S. E. of Margate,
On the employment of Instruments in Mid-
wifery," who evidently seems to have im-
bibed somewhat of the Spirit And the
Caution which pertained to the early Wri-
ters on the forceps, And of, Course, has a
most unfavourable Opinion of their frequent
Use, And who, in Order to strengthen his
position, introduces a dislike his Uncle,
the late Dr Davis, had to the use of in-
struments, with the result of his own prac-
tice, And thus quotes from Dr. David D. Davis'

Elements of Operative Midwifery!" — "Of all the questions that may occur during a deliberate consideration of this subject, none can exceed in importance that of the average frequency with which we should apply to the instrumental resources of our art. I am sorry to say that we are not in possession of sufficient documentary evidence to enable us to decide this point; whilst the evidence we have is of so unsatisfactory and conflicting a nature as to afford us but very slender materials for useful practical deduction: and again, — "Upon the whole, therefore, I am much inclined to the opinion that it cannot be absolutely necessary to have recourse to the use of the forceps or the lever more frequently than once in three hundred, or at most two hundred

Once fifty Cases, in order to insure for puerperal
women the greatest possible advantages attainable from these Obstetric powers." From these
extracts I readily infer that Dr Davis, drew
his Conclusions, Not from Actual experience,
but from the Statistics of Others, and on this
Account" is much inclined to the Opinion,
that it Cannot be Absolutely necessary to
have recourse to the use of the forceps or
the lever More frequently than once in three
Hundred, ~~Seven~~ Or at most in two Hundred
And fifty Cases."

"To determine when the forceps becomes"
Absolutely Necessary" is, at all times a points
of the greatest Nicety, and which No ~~Accoucheur~~
Accoucheur Can ever be Justified to wait
upon, When they Can, Long ere such a Crisis
be used with the utmost Safety

Why draw a bow at a Venture when the Object Can be made Certain? Why peril the fate of the patient upon a point when it Can be rested upon a broader base? Where is the danger should the forceps be employed long before the patient rests on the equilibrium between life and death? What the Objection to its use, even immediately after the arrestment of the head, once what the evil, should a labour, which might have terminated Naturally, be accelerated by the instrument? therefore the ~~Instrument~~ practical question is Not, when do they become "Absolutely Necessary"? but when Can they be used with benefit? The Clause "Absolutely Necessary" is indeed an ignis fatuus to the young and inexperienced practitioner, and much more becoming the members of the Old en School, and one which leads us little

to the Conclusion that we must wait for a succession of hours after the delivery is in our power for the Critical Moment when Nature shall have exhausted the last of her energy, and can hold out no longer tile the Springs of life are beginning to ebb, and we are certain the powers of it are inadequate to the task. When the use of the forceps thus becomes Absolute, the Child in general will have perished, and the patient will have many dangers and difficulties to Overcome. And should any of the train of formidable and untoward events occur, as they too often do, as a Consequence of such unnecessary delay, the practitioner may indeed Congratulate himself on his inexhaustible and unenviable stock of patience, but he can only have a scanty meed of praise to bestow on the Soundness of his Judgment. Thus he brings himself into the deep waters of perplexity, and where he ought to have been only an adjuvant to Nature, the Labour must be completed by his own physical powers.

Why not render apistance when Nature is Capable of being apisted, and when such timous apistance is Calculated to prevent a host of formidable evils;

Doubtless however, it is not the Object of Art officiously to interfere with the Movements of Nature when She neither requires nor admits Co-Operation, but is she to be left forced to maintain an unequeal Contest untile she be in danger of being overpowered and defeated? It is not My Object here to point out the Cases where the forceps are merely admipible, where they may be employed with benefits, and where they are indispensable; suffice it to say, that wherever it is desireable to accelerate the delivery by artificial apistance, if the forceps can be fairly employed, I see no valide Objection to their use.

Mr Waddington says that three Cases have occured in his practice out of 1484 Cases, requiring the applica tion of the forceps / the extent of his practice of 33 years

That is one precp Case in Eleven years. These Cases are to few and far between, that Mr Macdiarmid Must have a poor Memory if he has not forgotten the lessons of the School. Nor it never occur to that gentlemen that a dexterous use of the forceps might have saved many long hours of sufferings did he never think that tedious and severe parturition often entails complaints upon the suffering which attend her through life! did he not Consider that the same Cause might give origen to Hydrocephalus, Epilepsy, and other Cerebral diseases of Children! Or is it in this way then, to use the elegant Language of Dr. Davis, that we insure to puerperal Women the greatest possible advantage attainable from these Obstetric powers—

The Secale Cornutum has had ancestors has it worm supporters as an agent for ex

citing Uterine Contraction, and thereby hastening to a termination those labours which otherwise might have fallen under the head of instrumental. In first labours it cannot safely be had recourse to, neither where the uterine action is powerful and undiminished, nor where there is much Mechanical resistance to Overcome, and thus, of necessity, must confine its application to very narrow limits.

That it is totally inadmissable in the first stage of parturition is Universally admitted, and that it is only to be exhibited where we have reason to Conclude from the former labours of the patients the relative size of the parts is such as would lead to the most favourable results, where the expulsive efforts ~~were the expulsive efforts~~ to be increased or renewed. Should, when the Secale is administered, the labour be passing from the first to the second stage, and should the head

in despite of the long and remitting pains which characterize the action of the Medicine, take a much longer period in its passage than was at first anticipated, the result will be a risk of rupture of the uterus on the one hand, and a dead or asphyxiated Child on the other. It is a subject most difficult to determine what Case will admits of its exhibition. The mere fact of the Mother having passed easily, and in the utmost safety, through the different stages of her confinement, and the parts implicated apparently being in the most favourable Condition for its exhibition, is at best presumptive evidence of a safe and Comfortable termination.

Certainly it is a truth resting upon every days experience. that Many patients who have had their Confinements of the easiest description, have experienced a Reverse of fortune in some of their succeeding ones being most painfull, tedious, and

difficulty, without there being any appreciable reason as to how it should be so, and which is, of itself, a very valid Objection to the employment of the ergot in any of the stages of labour.

It is a mere stimulant to greater exertion applied to an Organ already weakened in its energy, and it may be, and consequently rather soliciting assistance in a very different Mode than by Compelling it to discharge a task which it has shown to be onerous for its powers. Nature, in this way excited, but not assisted, is called upon to relieve herself, as best she may, and bear the Consequence of extreme and unnatural exertions.

A Medicine of this description never can, and never ought, to be placed in Competition with the forceps, seeing its action to be beyond the practitioner's Control. Having once administered the dose, he can neither increase its energy nor

Modify its Action. How different it is with the ~~other~~ application of the other; it is a Remedy entirely at the disposal of the Operator, so that Not-even one drachm of Power May be employed More than the Case requires- a Remedy that Can Conveniently be used in Accordance With Uterine Contraction, a Remedy the Most effective for assisting and Not-Merely exciting tired Nature to renewed and More desperate efforts- a Remedy, the sum of Whose extracting Power fails, to be deducted from the sum of the expelling power, which the Uterus is otherwise Called upon to employ, and a Remedy by which the burden of Nature is lightened and Abridged.

I have therefore No hesitation in Coming to the Conclusion, that Where the Case is evidently a fair one for the administration of the ergot, it offers a much More satisfactory appearance for the forceps. The Vectis or Lever, has been Loud to cautionly to supersede or supply the place of the

forceps. The Objections to its use are so Very, evi-
dent and Manifest, as to require No Comment.
Indeed it can Very Rarely be Applied with a
reasonable hope, par les the certainty, of forwar
ding parturition. Where the lever becomes ad
Mipible, the forceps, if employed, would in
every Case supersede its use, and the Results
would invariably be far More Certain and
Satisfactory. Those who regard the forceps as
an instrument Absolutely dangerous, and entirely use
less, Neither Know the Mode of Acting with them, nor the
difficulties of the Art, and have doubtless Judged
them by the Abuse they themselves have Made
of them, and have got that the Most Safe and use
full instrument Often becomes Hazardous in the
hands of ignorance and Prejudice. — to
Sayes the learned Bandelocque. —

Finis.